

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BUJUMBURA 0747

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TAGS: EAID, PFOR, BY, US

SUBJECT: BILATERAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAM FOR BURUNDI

REF: BUJUMBURA 533

1. IN THE THREE MONTHS SINCE REFTEL WAS TRANSMITTED, ALL OF US CONCERNED WITH BURUNDI-U.S. RELATIONS HAVE HAD TIME TO REFLECT UPON THE ISSUES INVOLVED IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MODEST AMERICAN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN THIS COUNTRY. I CERTAINLY HOPE THAT THE DISCUSSIONS WHICH I HAD IN WASHINGTON AT THE END OF SEPTEMBER ON THIS SUBJECT WITH SENIOR OFFICIALS OF THE DEPARTMENT AND AID HELPED TO SPREAD AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM AND TO SHARPEN THE FOCUS ON THE CRITICAL QUESTION THAT MUST BE ANSWERED. AS I SEE IT, THIS IS WHETHER FOUR MILLION DESPERATELY POOR BURUNDIANS ARE TO REMAIN INDEFINITELY FOR US AS A SORT OF AFRICAN PARIAH, CUT OFF FROM AID THAT WE ARE GIVING EVEN TO SUCH IDEOLOGICALLY AND POLITICALLY HOSTILE NATIONS AS GUINEA, SOMALIA, AND TANZANIA, WHILE WE WRING OUR HANDS IN HIGH-MINDED DISDAIN ABOUT BURUNDI'S ETHNIC TURMOIL AND BAD HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD OF 1972-3, BUT SHY AWAY FROM ANY PRACTICAL MEASURES OF ASSISTANCE THAT MIGHT DIRECTLY HELP THE VICTIMS OF ETHNIC DISCRIMINATION AND, IN A SMALL WAY, PROMOTE POLITICAL STABILITY AND ETHNIC RECONCILIATION.

2. THESE MATTERS WERE FULLY REVIEWED IN REFTEL IN THEIR MANY
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NAUNCES AND COMPLEXITIES, AND THERE IS NO NEED TO REPEAT ALL

THE ARGUMENTATION NOW. NEVERTHELESS, IN URGING THE DEPARTMENT AGAIN THAT A POSITIVE DECISION ON FY-1977 AID FOR BURUNDI BE MADE WITHIN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS, SO THAT AN ITEM FOR THIS CAN BE CLEARED WITH OMB AND PUT INTO AID'S BUDGET PRESENTATION TO CONGRESS IN JANUARY, I THINK THAT I OWE THOSE WHO MUST GRAPPLE WITH THE ISSUE A FEW FURTHER OBSERVATIONS.

3. I CAN THINK OF NO BETTER STARTING POINT THAN THE SECRETARY'S DINNER SPEECH TO REPS OF OAU COUNTRIES IN NEW YORK ON SEPTEMBER 23, BECAUSE, IF WE FOLLOW HIS GUIDELINES, THE REMAINING DOUBTS ABOUT INITIATION OF AN AID EFFORT IN BURUNDI SHOULD DISAPPEAR. FIRST OF ALL, HE RECOGNIZED FULLY THAT NATION-BUILDING IN AFRICA IS LIKELY TO BE ACCOMPANIED BY ETHNIC STRIFE AND BY PROFOUND CHALLENGES TO NATIONAL UNITY AND CULTURAL IDENTITY. DESPITE (OR PERHAPS BECAUSE OF) THIS, HE OFFERED AMERICAN HELP. HIS STATEMENT OF OUR AMERICAN CONCERN ABOUT RAISING AFRICAN ECONOMIC STANDARDS, ABOUT BRINGING AFRICA MORE BROADLY INTO THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM, WITHOUT INVOLVING IT IN GREAT POWER RIVALRIES, AND ABOUT ENCOURAGING SELF-DETERMINATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS HAS RELEVANCE IN ALL ITS ASPECTS TO BURUNDI. WHILE BURUNDI ITSELF MAY BE UNIMPORTANT, HIS AND OUR OVERALL POLICY TOWARDS AFRICA CANNOT BE BUILT ON A CONTINENT-WIDE BASIS OTHER THAN STEP BY STEP WITH EACH OF THE MANY, AND OFTEN SMALL, NATIONS OF AFRICA. BURUNDI, THUS, IS ONE OF THE VERY DESIRABLE BUILDING BLOCKS. BASICALLY, MOREOVER, BURUNDI'S CLOSE ORIENTATION ON WESTERN EUROPE, ITS FREE ENTERPRISE PROCLIVITIES, AND ITS PASSION TO AVOID DOMINANCE BY ANY MAJOR POWER MAKE IT A MODERATELY PROMISING PLACE FOR SOME AMERICAN OFFICIAL EFFORT. IT IS ALSO HIGHLY RECEPTIVE TO THE CONCEPT OF AMERICAN INVESTMENT, WHICH THE SECRETARY WISHED TO ENCOURAGE, AND IF THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF ITS NEWLY-FOUND MINERAL RESOURCES IS SUFFICIENTLY DOCUMENTED, PROMISING BILATERAL TIES IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR ARE LIKELY TO DEVELOP.

4. THE SECRETARY EMPHASIZED THAT THE U.S. WOULD "DEVOTE SPECIAL ATTENTION TO THE URGENT NEEDS OF THE POOREST COUNTRIES" BY SAYING THAT "OUR BILATERAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IS INCREASINGLY CONCENTRATED ON THE LEAST DEVELOPED". HE ALSO NOTED THAT WE "PROPOSE TO DOUBLE OUR BILATERAL ASSISTANCE TO EXPAND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION" IN AFRICA, AND THIS SECTOR IS, OF COURSE, PRECISELY

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THE ONE IN WHICH THIS EMBASSY WOULD LIKE TO ARRANGE FOR AID INVOLVEMENT. SENIOR BURUNDI OFFICIALS ARE AWARE OF THE SECRETARY'S VIEWS, AND THEY WONDER WHEN THESE EMINENTLY SENSIBLE WORDS WILL TAKE ON SOME CONCRETE MEANING FOR THEIR COUNTRY.

5. THE DOUBTERS ON AID FOR BURUNDI REFER TO CONGRESSIONAL ATTENTION DURING 1973 TO THE LARGE-SCALE KILLINGS WHICH OCCURRED IN BURUNDI A FEW YEARS AGO AND TO THE CONTINUED POLITICAL,

ECONOMIC, AND SOCIAL DOMINANCE OVER THE PREPONDERANT HUTU MAJORITY BY THE ELITE ELEMENTS OF THE 14 PERCENT TUTSI MINORITY. PREOCCUPATION WITH SUCH FACTORS MAKES THESE AMERICAN OFFICIALS LOATH TO INCORPORATE YET ANOTHER PROGRAM INTO THE AID BUDGET WHICH MIGHT AROUSE CONGRESSIONAL WRATH AGAINST THE DEPARTMENT. MY OWN BELIEF IS THAT THIS ANXIETY IS EXAGGERATED. TO BE SURE, I HAVE NOT COUNTED NOSES ON THE HILL, BUT IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT ONLY A VERY FEW CONGRESSMEN INVOLVED THEMSELVES IN BURUNDI MATTERS EVEN WHEN THE ISSUE WAS MOST PROMINENT. BESIDES, WITH THE MARKED ATTENUATION OF ETHNIC TENSION HERE, AND WITH THE RETURN OF INTERNAL STABILITY, WITH BURUNDI'S TOTAL DISAPPEARANCE FROM THE AMERICAN PRESS, AND WITH THE EMERGENCE OF MANY OTHER MUCH MORE PRESSING FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES FOR THE UNITED STATES, IT IS VERY UNLIKELY THAT A NOTABLE FUSS WILL DEVELOP OVER A MODEST AID REQUEST FOR BURUNDI.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BUJUMBURA 0747

6. EVEN IF IT SOMEHOW DID, I BELIEVE THAT EFFECTIVE AND SATISFYING ANSWERS COULD BE PROVIDED. SOME OF THEM CAN BE FOUND IN REFTEL (PARAS 2, 9, 10, 11, 15, AND 16), BUT I FIND THAT THE REASON IMPLICIT IN THE SECRETARY'S REMARKS ON SOUTH AFRICA IN HIS SPEECH ARE ALSO VERY INSTRUCTIVE. THERE, A SIMILAR CONDITION OF MINORITY RULE PREVAILS, THOUGH WITH THE ADDED IRRITANT THAT THE ETHNIC CONFLICT ALSO INVOLVES PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS OF RACE AND COLONIAL HISTORY. YET THE SECRETARY APPARENTLY REJECTED ANY SIMPLISTIC SOLUTION BY REFERRING TO THE PROBLEM AS ONE OF UNBEATABLE COMPLEXITY, IN WHICH CHANGE WILL CERTAINLY COME,

BUT IN WHICH THE CHANGE WE WILL SUPPORT WILL TAKE THE SHAPE OF A PROGRESSIVE AND PEACEFUL EVOLUTION. OUR ATTITUDE TOWARD BURUNDI'S ETHNIC ANTAGONISMS AND PAST STRIFE CAN HARDLY AFFORT TO TAKE A TOUGHER LINE THAN TOWARD SOUTH AFRICA. ON THE CONTRARY, IN BURUNDI, THROUGH A WELL-TAILORED AID PROGRAM, WE HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO DO SOMETHING TO EASE TENSIONS AND TO IMPROVE THE LOT OF SOME OF THE ECONOMICALLY MOST UNFORTUNATE AND OF THE POLITICALLY MOST DEPRIVED.

7. IT SEEMS TO ME THAT THOSE WHO DO NOT RPT NOT WANT TO GIVE PRACTICAL APPLICATION IN BURUNDI TO THE SECRETARY'S OVERALL POLICIES TOWARD AFRICA ARE TAKING ON A MAJOR BURDEN, FOR WHICH NO SATISFACTORY JUSTIFICATION HAS BEEN FURNISHED. IN ALL GOOD CONSCIENCE, I URGE STICKING WITH THE BOSS, COMING TO AN EARLY AND AFFIRMATIVE DECISION TO GO AHEAD WITH BILATERAL AID HERE, AND
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THEN FACING ANY CRITICS WHO MAY UNEXPECTEDLY APPEAR WITH THE LOGIC AND GOOD HUMANITARIAN SENSE OF OUR NEW POLICY.
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